

Wahi Kapu o Pele

(Sacred Place of Pele)



*No Kahiki mai ka wahine o Pele,
Mai ka 'aina mai o Polapola,
Mai ka punohu a Kane,
Mai ke ao lapa i ka lani.*

The woman Pele comes from Kahiki,
From the land of Polapola,
From the rising mist of Kane,
From the clouds that move in the sky.

There was a time in the mysterious past when the air was surrounded with spiritual beings and a thin veil divided the living from the dead, the natural from the supernatural. During that time Pele, goddess of the volcano, came to Hawai'i.



Photo Analysis

- 1) Who is Pele?
- 2) Where did she come from?
- 3) What is Pele holding in her right hand?

“Pele, the sacred living deity of Hawai'i's volcanoes, controls the limitless power of creation through her perseverance, molten strength, and unearthly beauty. Her passion emanates from her ancient existence. Revered and honored is the fire goddess. She is my spritual guardian and forever the heartbeat and soul, continuously giving life to her land and its people.”

Pele Hanoa, August 8, 2004 (her 81st birthday)

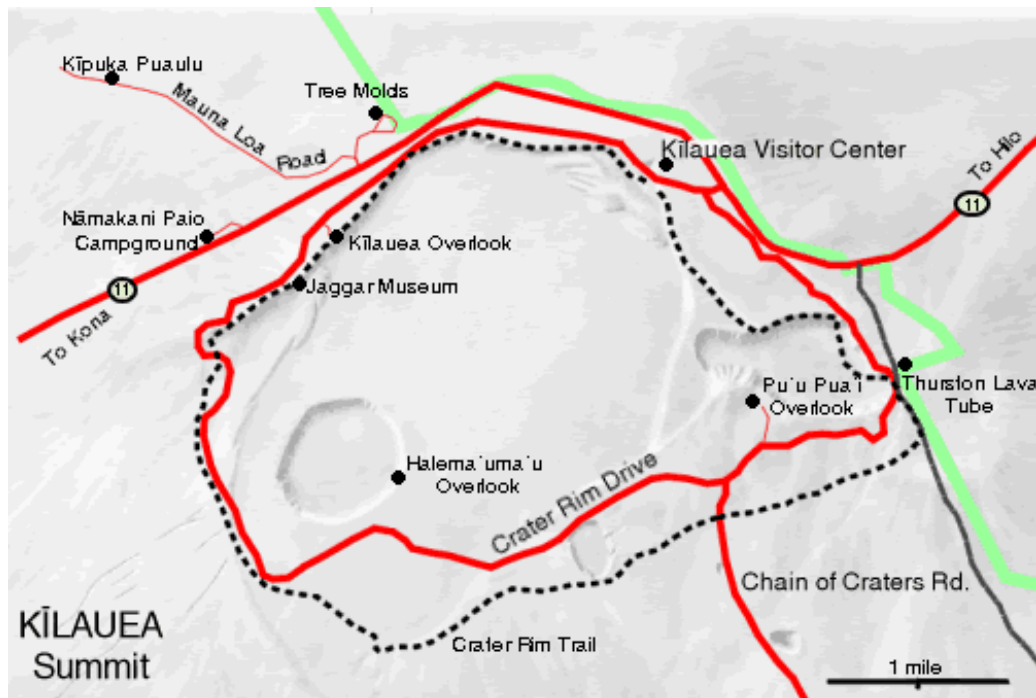
Setting the stage

Having traveled for many miles from Kahiki in search of a suitable home for her fire and family, Pele finally settled in the crater of Halema'uma'u at the summit of Kilauea Volcano.

Pele personifies fire and volcanism in all its forms. The volcanic landscape is her handiwork. The poetic name for her is *Ka wahine 'ai honua*, the woman who devours the earth. She sends streams of molten lava flowing down the slopes of the island of Hawai'i, destroying everything in its path. The land trembles and the sky is afire with a crimson glow as her molten body moves across the land. Those present whisper in awe, "*Ae, 'aia la o Pele, there is Pele*".



Locating the Site: Map



Determining the Facts: Mo‘o‘ōlelo – Oral History

Pele and Kamapua‘a

Many Hawaiian stories speak of the relationships between Pele and other gods and humans. One story tells why Pele's home at the summit of Kīlauea is called Halema‘uma‘u, house of the ‘amau fern.

The *kinolau* (body form) of the pig god Kamapua‘a can be a man, fish, or fern. Kamapua‘a embodies many things in nature like the mist or rain. When he came to Kīlauea to woo Pele, she rejected his love and cried out at him, "*A‘ohe ‘oe kanaka, he pua‘a ‘oe*, you are not a man, you are a pig!"

He was insulted beyond words and an angry battle ensued between them. Pele hurled bolts of fire and molten lava. Kamapua‘a brought down torrential rains to douse the fires of Pele. The battle raged for a great period of time, each trying to out do the other. Kamapua‘a quickly turned himself into the ‘ama‘u fern and surrounded her fiery home. To this day we remember the battle between Pele and Kamapua‘a and is one story about how Halema‘uma‘u got its name.



Ho‘okupu



(gift/offering) red fern frond, pork, red fish, banana, ‘ōhi‘a-lehua blossoms, red ‘ohelo berries that grow near her domain.

‘Ōhi‘a Lehua

The favorite flower of Pele. When picked the rains come. What uses did Polynesians have for this tree? Why is it important?





Ka 'Ohelo

Ka'ohelo is a sister of Pele out of whose bones sprang the red-berried bush. Embodied in earthly and heavenly phenomena, Pele and her 'ohana (family) are ever present in Hawai'i.

How are the berries and leaves used?

Visual Evidence

We descended into the crater. Pele revealed herself in robes of awful majesty. O goddess of Hawaiian Lore, enshrouded in the mysteries of eternity, who may know the secrets of thy heart? What scientist may wrest from thy creation or know from whence thou art?

Volcano House Hotel Ledger, Edward Smith, 9 August 1885.



The army of Keouaku`ahu`ula set out on their way in three different companies. The company in advance had not preceded far before the ground began to shake and rock beneath their feet and it became quite impossible to stand. Soon a dense cloud of darkness was seen to rise out of the crater, and almost at the same instant the electrical effect upon the air was so great that the thunder began to roar in the heavens and the lightning to flash. It continued to ascend and spread abroad until the whole region was enveloped and the light of day entirely excluded. The darkness was the more terrific, being made visible by an awful glare from streams of red and blue lights variously combined that issued from the pit below, and being lit up at intervals by the intense flashes of lightning from above. Soon followed an immense volume of sand and cinders which were thrown in high heaven and came down in a destructive shower for many miles around. Some few persons of the forward company were burned to death by the sand and cinders and others were seriously injured. All experienced a suffocating sensation upon the lungs and hastened on with all possible speed... The rear body, which was the nearest to the volcano at the time of the eruption, seemed to suffer the least injury, and after the earthquake and shower of sand passed over, hastened forward... but... on coming up to their comrades of the center party, they discovered them all to have become corpses. Some were lying down, and others sitting upright clasping with their dying grasp their wives and children and joining noses ... as in the act of taking final leave. So much like life they looked that they first supposed them merely at rest, and it was not until they had come up to them and handled them that they could detect their mistake. The whole party, including women and children, not one of them survived to relate the catastrophe that had befallen their comrades.



The eruption of Kilauea in 1790 is of great interest to geologists and Hawaiian historians. Hawaiians provided a narrative of the eruption to early missionaries (Ellis, 1827; Dibble, 1843). Recent advances in volcanology have also provided new interpretations of the dynamics of the eruption. Lastly, and most obviously, the deposits of this eruption blanket the rim of the caldera, offering physical clues to the nature of the eruption.

Scientific Evidence

According to USGS geologist, Don Swanson, the geological evidence that we see today, links to the stories told by the Hawaiian people about historical eruptions. “I’ve found, at least to my satisfaction, that some of the most important Hawaiian chants and stories describe some of Kilauea’s past volcanic events, including explosions, the collapse of the top of the volcano to form the caldera about 500 years ago, and some of the large lava flows. It has been the source of immense satisfaction to make a connection between the oral history and the geologic history”.



Sometime before 1000 A.D., Kilauea volcano blasted skyward in an eruption so massive it sent rocks and dust as much as 18 miles into the air.

The cloud of debris may have been seen on Maui, said Don Swanson, scientist-in-charge at the Hawaiian Volcano Observatory.

And the eruption may have changed the way Hawaiians viewed Kilauea, ushering in the new volcano goddess Pele, said Hawaiian cultural consultant Kepa Maly.

For several years, geologists have known about fist-size rocks shot through the air, different from surrounding rocks, lying on the ground south of Kilauea, Swanson said. In August, geologists took a closer look. "What we found surprised, even shocked us," Swanson said. About five miles from the summit, they found a rock weighing 4.3 pounds. At six miles from the summit, they found one weighing nearly 3 pounds.

The eruption of Kulanaokuaiki (600-1,000 AD) is an event that may help explain the correlation between two deities. “Everyone has heard of the volcano goddess Pele, but not everyone knows that she was sometimes called a “malihini”. Before her, was the volcano god, `Aila`au. His name means “forest eater” and he was relatively peaceful. Pele was more violent and drove `Aila`au away. Was it this eruption or a different event that lead to the rise of Pele and fall of Aila`au?”, said, Maly. According to Don Swanson, one thing we know for sure, is that Kilauea has been very active since that time period!

Field Activity I.

KĪLAUEA, THE SACRED HOME OF PELE

Use the letters from the Hawaiian alphabet and corresponding numbers below to find the name of the big crater inside Kīlauea Caldera where the goddess Pele lives.

A	H	E	I	K	L	M	N	O	P	U	W
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12

2	1	6	3	7	1	11	7	1	11	
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Unscramble the letters below to learn what this name means in English.

E	H	S	R	U	F	O	N	
—	—	—	—		—	—	—	—



‘Ama‘u

AKANI KŌLEA

From where we are standing at Akani Kōlea, we see many steam vents and sulphur vents. Sulphur is a yellow chemical that smells like rotten eggs. Hawaiians call it Kūkae Pele. You will know when you are near a sulphur vent. Steam vents are caused by rain water seeping into cracks in the ground. Since hot volcanic rocks are only a few feet under the surface, the water is heated, creating steam.

IMAGINATION

For this activity you will need your imagination and memory.
Draw the kinolau of the pig god that is a plant.



Write the name of the pig god.

`Oli: E Pele

E Pele, e Pele ka`u ka`u li ana

E Pele, e Pele hua ina hua ina

E Pele e Pele oni luna oni luna

E Pele e Pele oni lalo oni lalo

He inoa no Pele

Pele, Pele, hissing along

Pele, Pele, bursting forth

Pele, Pele, moving upward

Pele, Pele, moving downward

In honor of Pele

Conclusion

Mo‘o‘ōlelo are wonderful examples of historic events that link the geological evidences found by scientists at this wahi kapu, Kīlauea, the sacred home of Pele.

Research and Information Sites:

Credits:

Description of Program:

Students will discover why Kīlauea is a sacred place by hearing a story about the area from the ranger, then share a story they heard about the volcano from their families, friends, or in school. Students will take a hike through the rain forest and experience first-hand, that *mo‘olelo* (stories) of Pele, her family, and other deities are linked to things found in nature (*kinolau*-body forms) and lava features. They will compare and contrast their findings and decide how these stories help geologists today. Finally, students will relate how Hawaiians linked the relationships of their deities to respect and stewardship of the land.

Learning Points:

Place Names Important To The Area

Kīlauea Volcano
Wahi kapu - sacred place
Halema‘uma‘u – home of Pele
Akani Kōlea – Pele and Kamapua‘a story
Palikapuokamohoali‘i – favorite brother of Pele

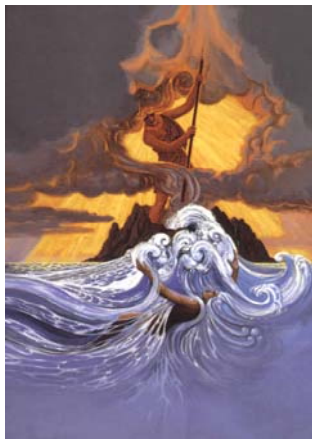
Native Plants and Their Relationships To Pele

‘Ōhi‘a – Lehua – home of Hopoe
‘Ōhelo - favorite fruit of Pele
Hāpu‘u – kinolau of Haumea
‘Ama‘u – kinolau of kamapua‘a

Sisters of Pele

Namakaokaha‘i – ocean

Hi‘iakaikapoliopēle – youngest/favorite



See photos above

Activity: Will be done at stopping points along the trail

- Work sheets
- 1) Halema‘uma‘u – word game
 - 2) Plant identification and drawing
 - 3) A ka Luna o Kīlauea – Hula Noho

Kīlauea

By Alice Namakelua

A ka luna o Kīlauea i ke ahi a ka wahine
Up at Kīlauea is the lady of the fire

Ha‘ana ka wahine Pele, uhi uha mai ana la
There goes Pele, creaking and cracking as she goes

No me ana o Pele i Puna, a ia ka palena a‘e kai ea
Pele moves from Puna, from the land to the sea

He inoa no ka wahine Pele, ka wahine noho a‘i Kīlauea.
Her name is Pele the woman who lives in Kīlauea.